

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Pavlich argues that, “Men are physically stronger than women. ...men have more muscle mass and greater bone density; they run faster and punch harder. It’s called biology. If a woman is going to protect herself against a man who intends to do her serious harm she needs to even the odds. And what’s the best way for her to do that? Own a gun and know how to use it.” Why do you think that some people do not recognize the facts presented here when choosing a position on the gun control issue? Do you agree with Ms. Pavlich’s last point here? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Ms. Pavlich points out that, “...even if we could build a giant magnet, fly it across the country and snap up every gun, it wouldn’t much matter to women’s safety. In Great Britain, where it’s almost impossible to get a gun, a woman is three times more likely to be raped than in America, according to a study by David Kopel, a professor of constitutional law at Denver University. Here’s another telling comparison between gun-free UK and gun-owning US. In the United States only about 13 percent of home burglaries take place when the occupants are home, but in the UK almost 60 percent do. Professor Kopel explains the disparity: ‘American burglars . . . avoid occupied homes because of the risk of getting shot. English burglars prefer occupied homes, because there will be wallets and purses with cash.’” Why would magically making all of the guns go away not matter much to women’s safety? What conclusions can you draw from the data provided by Professor Kopel?
- In sharing the case of the mail carrier, Ms. Pavlich recounts that Catherine Latta, “...went to a rough part of town and bought a handgun. Five hours later, her ex-boyfriend attacked her outside her home. She shot him in self-defense, and saved her life. I should add that firing a gun is very rare. Just carrying it – let alone brandishing it – is a deterrent. And, isn’t that the issue? Personal safety? How is a woman supposed to defend herself?” How would you answer Ms. Pavlich’s question about the real issue being a personal safety one for women? How would you answer her second question about how a woman is supposed to defend herself without a gun?
- Ms. Pavlich goes on to explain, “Yet every year, progressives push for more and more gun control without ever considering who will pay the price. It won’t be the bad guys. They will always get the guns they want. It will be the good women who need to equal the odds in a dangerous confrontation with a man.” Why do you think that progressives, especially feminists who value equality so much, advocate for more and more gun restrictions even though more restriction makes women less safe and makes committing violent crimes against women easier for criminals? Explain.
- At the conclusion of the video, Ms. Pavlich notes that, “Women owning guns shouldn’t be a partisan issue. In fact, it’s a women’s rights issue. I’m all for equality between the sexes. And I practice what I preach. That’s why I own a gun.” Why should gun control be a women’s rights issue? Why do you think that gun control is a partisan issue? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Gun Control

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Hold Your Fire: Gun control Won’t Stop Rising Violence,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What was Chief Justice Rehnquist’s conclusion regarding *United States v. Verdugo-Urquidez*?
- Do you agree with the points made by Professor Kopel in the article? If yes, which ones, and why? If no, which ones and why not?
- Which points in the article support the points made by Ms. Pavlich in the video, and how, specifically, do they support Ms. Pavlich’s main point?



QUIZ

GUNS RIGHTS ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- 1. Feminists are for _____.**
 - a. gun ownership
 - b. taking guns away from women
 - c. keeping guns in the hands of criminals
 - d. concealed carry permits

- 2. What's the best way for a woman to protect herself against a man who intends to do her serious harm?**
 - a. Never be alone.
 - b. Keep a whistle and pepper spray on her at all times.
 - c. Take self-defense classes.
 - d. Own a gun and know how to use it.

- 3. In the United States only about ___ percent of home burglaries take place when the occupants are home, but in the UK almost ___ percent do.**
 - a. 31; 52
 - b. 22; 43
 - c. 13; 60
 - d. 40; 60

- 4. Who will pay the price for progressives pushing for more and more gun control?**
 - a. The bad guys.
 - b. Female police officers.
 - c. Good women.
 - d. Mothers.

- 5. Women owning guns is a women's rights issue.**
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Hold Your Fire: Gun control Won't Stop Rising Violence

BY DAVID B. [KOPEL](#)

Policy Review, Winter 1993, Issue no. 63; p. 58

As deaths from rampant gun violence mount, and city-dwellers from Boston to Los Angeles learn to distinguish the pop of a Smith & Wesson pistol from the blast of a Winchester shotgun, Americans insist on action to combat the national crime epidemic.

Although the per-capita murder rate remains below the record set in 1980, the actual number of homicides reached an all-time high of 24,703 in 1991; most of these murders were committed with guns. Most disturbing of all is the rise in violent crimes committed by gun-wielding teenagers. Able to acquire illegal weapons with ease, in spite of a nationwide prohibition on firearms sales to minors, teenage thugs display a disregard for human life that would have shocked the criminals of earlier generations. The latest urban terror, "carjacking," is the seizure at gunpoint of automobiles from their drivers, usually women.

As armed gangs settle turf disputes over drug-selling territory through mortal combat, they kill not only each other, but also innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire. Firearms violence, once thought to be the problem of the inner city, is spreading into the suburbs and beyond. And with depressing frequency, newspapers report stories of children dying in senseless gun accidents. In Louisiana last October, a Japanese exchange student was mistakenly shot when he entered the wrong house on the way to a Halloween party, and, not understanding the warning, continued to advance toward the homeowner despite an order to "Freeze!"

To some well-meaning Americans, the antidote to gun crime is gun control. Senator John Chafee (R-RI) calls for the confiscation of all handguns. Other voices, such as Handgun Control, Inc.'s Sara Brady, urge a national waiting period on handgun purchases, and a ban on assault weapons. The national media's insistent message is that we must "do something" about guns.

Meanwhile, the National Rifle Association adds tens of thousands of members every month -- membership is at a record three million -- and continues to stymie gun control at nearly every turn. Although the 99th, 100th, and 101st Congresses passed some minor gun controls, the 102nd Congress went home without enacting any new gun-control measures. The New Jersey legislature is ready to overturn its assault-weapon ban the moment the legislative leadership schedules a vote on the issue.

Critics of gun control believe that it violates the right to keep and bear arms guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution and by 43 state constitutions. In the American political tradition, the right to own a gun is seen as intimately related to the natural right of self-defense, to what John Locke described as the natural right to control and protect one's body and property. Millions of

Americans consider an armed citizenry to be one of the principal safeguards against possible tyranny by the state.

The constitutional argument against laws that infringe on gun ownership was strengthened by the 1990 Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Verdugo-Urquidez*. There, Chief Justice Rehnquist observed that the phrase "right of the people" occurs several times in the Bill of Rights, specifically the Second Amendment's "right of the people to keep and bear arms," the First Amendment's "right of the people peaceably to assemble," and the Fourth Amendment's "right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures." In all cases, the Court said, the phrase "right of the people" was used as a "term of art" that referred to individual Americans.

But critics of gun control do not base their opposition on political principles alone. They also cite a large body of recent social science research, much of which has been produced by scholars who formerly believed that gun control was an obvious solution to crime.

Jimmy Carter's Shocker

When gun control first became an important national issue in the 1960s, there was almost no research worth noting on the subject. Partisans on both sides of the debate had hardly more ammunition than intuitions and bumper-sticker slogans.

The man most responsible for the change in the intellectual terms of the gun debate was Jimmy Carter, or, more precisely, the grant-review team that Carter appointed to the National Institute of Justice. Intending to build the case for comprehensive federal gun restrictions, the Carter administration handed out a major gun-control research grant in 1978 to sociology professor James D. Wright and his colleagues Peter Rossi and Kathleen Daly. Wright was already on record as favoring much stricter controls, and he and his colleagues were highly regarded sociologists. Rossi, a University of Massachusetts professor, would later become president of the American Sociology Association. Wright, who formerly served as director of the Social and Demographic Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, now teaches at Tulane. Daly is now at the University of Michigan.

Wright and his colleagues were asked to survey the state of research regarding the efficacy of gun control, presumably to show that gun control worked and that America needed more of it. But when the researchers produced their report for the National Institute of Justice in 1982, they delivered a document quite different from the one they had expected to write. Carefully reviewing all existing research, the three scholars found no persuasive scholarly evidence that America's 20,000 gun-control laws had reduced criminal violence. For example, the federal Gun Control Act of 1968, which banned most interstate gun sales, had no discernible impact on the criminal acquisition of guns from other states. Washington, D.C.'s ban on the ownership of handguns that had not already been registered in the District was not linked to any reduction in gun crime. Even Detroit's law providing mandatory sentences for felonies committed with a gun was found to have no effect on gun-crime patterns, in part because judges would often reduce the sentence for the underlying offense in order to balance out the mandatory two-year extra sentence for use of a gun.

What Criminals Say About Gun Control

The most thorough subsequent study of the efficacy of gun control has been performed by Florida State University's Gary Kleck, who analyzed data for all 170 U.S. cities with a population over 100,000, testing for the impact of 19 different types of gun controls, and looking for the controls' effects on suicides, accidents, and five different crimes. Kleck, a liberal Democrat and ACLU member, found that gun controls did reduce gun suicide, but not the overall suicide rate. The only control that reduced crime was a strict penalty for carrying an illegal gun, which seemed to lower the robbery rate. Waiting periods, various licensing systems, and registration appeared to have no statistically discernible impact. Kleck's analysis was

based on data for the years 1979-1981, and is included in his recent book, *Point Blank*, which contains the best single-volume overview of gun-control research.

Wright and Rossi produced another study for the National Institute of Justice, this one involving the habits of America's felons. Interviewing felony prisoners in 10 state correctional systems in 1981, Wright and Rossi found that gun-control laws had no effect on criminals' ability to obtain guns. Only 12 percent of criminals, and only 7 percent of the criminals specializing in handgun crime, had acquired their last crime handgun at a gun store. Of those, about one quarter had stolen the gun from a store; a large number of the rest, Wright and Rossi suggested, had probably procured the gun through a legal surrogate buyer, such as a girlfriend with a clean record. For the few remaining felons who actually did buy their own guns, the purchase might have been lawful because the purchaser as yet had no felony record.

The survey further indicated that 56 percent of the prisoners said that a criminal would not attack a potential victim who was known to be armed. Seventy-four percent agreed with the statement that "One reason burglars avoid houses where people are at home is that they fear being shot during the crime." Thirty-nine percent of the felons had personally decided not to commit a crime because they thought the victim might have a gun, and 8 percent said the experience had occurred "many times." Criminals in states with higher civilian gun-ownership rates worried the most about armed victims.

Since criminals can never be entirely sure which burglary targets may or may not contain a homeowner with a gun, or which potential robbery or rape victims may be carrying a concealed firearm, the ownership of firearms by half of American households provides a general deterrent to crime that benefits the entire population.

How Guns Prevent Crime

Consistent with the reports of criminals, ordinary citizens also report that gun ownership plays an important role in preventing crime. Professor Kleck estimates that handguns are used approximately 645,000 times for defense against an attacker every year in the United States.

The figure, ironically, is based on data from a survey conducted on behalf of the pro-control National Alliance Against Violence (NAAV). NAAV hired Peter Hart, a leading Democratic pollster, to survey Americans on guns, asking, among other things: "Within the past five years, have you yourself or another member of your household used a handgun, even if it was not fired, for self-protection or protection of property at home, work, or elsewhere, excluding military service or police work?" Six percent answered "yes." Follow-up questions revealed that 3 percent of the respondents had used the handgun against a person, 2 percent against an animal, and 1 percent against both. That 4 percent said "yes" to defensive gun use against persons meant that about 18 percent of households where a handgun was owned for protection had actually used the handgun for protection.

Kleck's analysis started with the 4-percent "yes" from Hart's data. Kleck made the conservative assumption that each "yes" related to only one gun usage in the last five years -- that no household used a firearm for self-defense two or more times in the five years. Thus, 3,224,880 households reported self-defense usage. Kleck then divided by five (since the question had asked about usage in the last five years) to arrive at an estimate for the annual number of uses of a handgun for self-defense: 644,976 -- or roughly once every 48 seconds.

Since Kleck's estimate is based on responses to a pollster, it should be emphasized that the 645,000 figure is necessarily imprecise. The original question posed by Peter Hart could have elicited a "yes" answer from an insecure gun owner who had perceived a criminal threat that did not in fact exist. Kleck partly controlled self-defense inflation from false "yes" answers by assuming that no "yes" answer related to more than one defensive use. In addition, the 645,000 estimate applies only to handguns; the original question did not ask about defensive use of rifles or shotguns.

In 1990, Professor Gary Mauser, of Canada's Simon Fraser University, asked Americans about use of a handgun or a long gun for self-defense; the responses suggested approximately 691,000 annual defensive uses of guns of all types. Accordingly, we may conclude that guns are used defensively at least half a million times a year.

Of course, the fact that a gun is used for defense does not mean that a shot is fired, or an attacker wounded or killed. About 95 percent of self-defense usage, says Kleck, involves merely the brandishing of a weapon to deter a perceived attack.

While the majority of defensive handgun use is simply brandishing a weapon to frighten away an attacker, Kleck suggests that 1,700 to 3,100 homicides a year are actually justifiable homicides committed by citizens using a firearm to defend themselves or another person against violent attack.

One Bullet at a Time

While most Americans believe they have a right to own a gun, and believe that guns can be protective, even many gun owners are baffled at the gun lobby's apparent intransigence in its refusal to accept a ban on so-called assault weapons or a waiting period on gun purchases.

The assault-weapon issue, however, turns out to involve much less than meets the eye. First of all, it should be emphasized that most people who own semiautomatics support strong controls on actual machine guns. Ever since the National Firearms Act of 1934, acquisition of real machine guns -- guns that continue to fire bullets repeatedly as long as the trigger is held down -- has required a difficult-to-obtain federal license. The NRA did not oppose the restrictive machine gun law when it was enacted, and has never indicated any desire to repeal the law.

While machine guns do have a unique capacity for rapid fire, what we know as assault weapons do not. Although most of the public believes that assault weapons are machine guns, the guns in question simply look like military weapons. Appearances notwithstanding, the guns fire just as every other common American gun does: squeezing the trigger fires one, and only one, bullet. According to Martin Fackler, former director of the Letterman Army Institute of Research, assault weapons are actually less lethal than many firearms commonly associated with hunting, such as an old-fashioned 12-gauge Winchester shotgun. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms states that no guns available for sale to the public can be easily converted to fire automatically.

Hard to Convert

The fact that semiautomatic assault weapons differ from other guns only cosmetically is one reason why legislative bodies have had so much trouble defining them. Since the guns do not fire faster than other guns, legislative definitions sometimes focus on extraneous features, such as the presence of a bayonet lug - as if we were suffering from a rash of criminals bayoneting people.

Other definitions are merely a list of particular guns with a military appearance. Among the guns targeted by assault-weapons legislation are the M1 Carbine; the AKS Rifle; the Uzi Pistol and Carbine, the Colt AR-15 H-Bar Rifle; the Springfield Armory 4800 Rifle; the M10 Pistol and Carbine; and the AK-56 rifle. Yet some of these guns are in no way distinguishable from many other guns not on the lists, such as the popular hunting rifles made by Winchester, Remington, and Ruger. As former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh noted, the main characteristic of an assault weapon seems to be that it has a black plastic stock rather than a brown wooden stock.

In practical terms, the legislative definition of assault weapon amounts to "the largest number of guns that a given legislature can be convinced to ban." The New Jersey assault-weapon prohibition even outlaws BB guns.

While assault weapons have been claimed to be the "weapon of choice" of criminals, such guns constitute a very small number of the crime guns seized by the police. The Florida Assault Weapons Commission's 1990 report found that assault weapons were used in 17 of 7,500 crimes in the years 1986-1989. The Washington, D.C. director of the police firearms section stated in early 1989 that not one of the more than 3,000 weapons the Washington police confiscated in 1988 was a semi-automatic assault rifle.

While some gun-prohibition advocates have claimed that a record number of police are being murdered by assault weapons, police-officer deaths in the line of duty are at their lowest level since 1968. The percentage of police homicides perpetrated with assault weapons is about 4 percent, a figure that has stayed constant over the last decade. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, which collects extensive data on all murders of police officers, reports no instance of a drug dealer ever killing a police officer with an Uzi.

That assault weapons should appear so rarely as crime guns seized makes sense. Street criminals need concealable weapons, and a Colt or a Kalashnikov rifle is pretty difficult to stick in a pocket. Indeed, rifles of all types constitute a tiny percentage of crime guns. According to the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department, rifles are used in less than one-tenth of 1 percent of armed robberies in the District. Nationally, only about 4 percent of the weapons used in homicides are rifles.

Occasionally, so-called assault weapons are used in gruesome mass murders. In Stockton, California in January 1991, Patrick Purdy used a Kalashnikov-type semiautomatic rifle to fire 105 shots in about four minutes at a schoolyard full of Cambodian immigrant children. Thirty-five people were wounded, six of whom died. Purdy's rate of fire could have been duplicated by anyone with an old-fashioned bolt-action rifle or simple revolver, and autopsies of the victims showed that the wounds were approximately equal in severity to wounds associated with a medium-sized handgun, which explains why 29 of the 35 people who were shot survived.

Thus, Purdy could have committed the same crime using many other types of guns. But the national media incorrectly told the American public that Purdy had used an automatic AK-47 rifle, and that such guns could be bought over the counter.

Lost in the media frenzy over Purdy's gun was Purdy himself, who committed suicide with a pistol at the end of his spree. Purdy perpetrated his crime after he had told a state mental-health worker that he thought about committing a mass murder with a gun or a bomb, and even though a parole report called him "a danger to himself and others."

Purdy had a lengthy history of crime and arrests, including a robbery in which a 55-year-old woman was seriously injured, receipt of stolen property, criminal conspiracy, possession of illegal weapons, and assault of a police officer, all reduced to misdemeanor charges. His crime career began when he was 14 years old and continued unabated for the next decade, until he killed himself at Stockton. Not one of Purdy's two-dozen encounters with the law ever led to more than a few weeks in prison. The media's hysterical focus on Purdy's gun enabled California's decrepit criminal-justice bureaucracy to escape public censure for allowing Purdy to roam the streets, free to commit his final, horrible crime.

"Cooling Off"

The waiting period, like the assault-weapon ban, becomes considerably less attractive when examined carefully. While the waiting-period initiative is often called the "Brady Bill," it would not have prevented John Hinckley from shooting Ronald Reagan and Jim Brady. When Hinckley bought two handguns in

October 1980, he had no felony record, and no public record of mental illness. The simple police and mental health records check proposed by the Brady Bill would not have turned up anything on him. And since Hinckley bought the guns more than five months in advance, a one-week wait would not have made any difference to him.

Indeed, a "cooling-off" period for handgun purchases requires a number of unlikely assumptions in order to work. First, the potential murderer -- denied a handgun immediately -- must then decide not to buy a rifle or a shotgun, which the Brady Bill would allow him to do. Then, he must not know how to buy a handgun on the black market, or how to obtain one from friends, relatives, or acquaintances. In addition, the type of murder he intends must not be one for which readily available alternative weapons, such as knives, automobiles, or bare hands will work. Finally, the person who was literally ready to commit a murder on day one of the waiting period must calm down by day seven, and stay calm from that day forward.

This scenario, while implausible, is not impossible; it is at least theoretically imaginable that a waiting period could "save at least one life." But a waiting period can cost lives, too.

"I'll Be Dead by Then"

Even a short waiting period will inevitably prevent people from protecting themselves against criminal attack during the wait. When Los Angeles citizens went to gun stores to buy firearms to protect life and property during the recent riots, they were told to come back 15 days later, to comply with California's waiting period on all guns.

After Hurricane Andrew, Florida's looters did considerably less damage than their California counterparts, in part because Florida has only a three-day handgun waiting period, and no wait at all on long guns.

Nor are waiting period victimizations confined only to periods of civil disorder. In September 1990, a mail carrier named Catherine Latta of Charlotte, North Carolina, went to the police to obtain permission to buy a handgun. Her ex-boyfriend had previously robbed her, assaulted her several times, and raped her. The clerk at the sheriff's office informed her the gun permit would take two to four weeks. "I told her I'd be dead by then," Latta later recalled. That afternoon, she bought an illegal \$ 20 semiautomatic pistol on the street. Five hours later, her ex-boyfriend attacked her outside her house, and she shot him dead. The county prosecutor decided not to prosecute Latta for either the self-defense homicide or the illegal gun.

A Wisconsin woman, Bonnie Elmasri, was not so lucky. On March 5, 1991 she called a firearms instructor, worried that her husband -- who was subject to a restraining order to stay away from her -- had been threatening her and her children. When she asked the instructor about getting a handgun, the instructor explained that Wisconsin has a 48-hour waiting period. Elmasri and her two children were murdered by her husband 24 hours later.

Waiting periods that appear reasonable in a legislative chamber may become unreasonable through administrative abuse. Although New Jersey law requires that the authorities act on gun license applications within 30 days, delays of 90 days are routine; some applications are delayed for years for no valid reason. In Maryland, where an appeals process exists, the police are overruled on 78 percent of the denials that are appealed.

Instant Records Check

If it is determined that the way to keep criminals from getting guns is to impose background checks on retail handgun sales -- a questionable determination -- a mandatory instant records check makes sense. The same technology that allows a store to receive verification of credit card validity within a few minutes can

also allow firearms dealers to dial a state government registry and verify that a gun buyer has no felony record.

Polling data suggests that most Americans prefer the instant check to the waiting period, particularly when presented with the choice of mandatory immediate check (the NRA proposal) versus a waiting period with no requirement than any check be conducted the (the Brady Bill). In recent years, many states have made major progress in bringing their criminal-records histories on-line. Thus, an instant check should become feasible in the near future.

And if records are not sufficiently accurate to support an instant check, they are also not sufficient to support a check with a one-week wait. Former Attorney General Thornburgh's task force found that even if there were no improvement in state criminal records, an instant check would be just as accurate as a check that could be completed in one week.

Unfortunately, if adequate safeguards are not in place, the instant check, like the waiting period, can be misused by police departments to create a registry of gun owners. In 1991, California admitted that it had used the state's handgun waiting period to create a list of handgun owners, even though nothing in California law authorizes the compilation of such a list.

Although the federal gun-control debate talks almost exclusively about retail handgun sales and the Brady Bill, the most effective method to deal with criminals obtaining guns might be to focus on the major source of criminal guns: the black market. A sensible first step in dealing with the black market would be to increase penalties for fencing a gun known to be stolen. In some states, theft and sale of a \$ 75 gun amounts only to petty larceny. Selling a "hot" \$ 75 pistol ought to be a more serious offense than selling a "hot" \$ 75 toaster-oven.

NRA 's Reform Proposal

While Congress has spent most of its gun-control effort debating new restrictions on gun acquisition, the discussion in many state legislatures has shifted to the carrying of firearms. The Second Amendment refers to a right "to keep and bear arms," and if the text is read consistently with original intent and judicial interpretations of the following century, the government cannot require that citizens ask for permission to carry an unconcealed gun in public.

But in many states, the right to carry has been obliterated by laws that require a police license to carry, and by police administrators who give out carry licenses only to the political elite. In New York City, crime victims who will testify at a forthcoming trial, and who are receiving death threats from the criminal's friends, are denied carry permits -- while politically powerful citizens are routinely granted them. While New York's abuse of licensing discretion is notorious, the licensing systems in many other cities are also skewed against people without some kind of clout.

Based on a literalist reading the Constitution, Second-Amendment advocates should lobby for repeal of all laws requiring a license to carry a gun. But instead, the NRA suggests only reform of easily abused gun licensing systems.

The NRA proposal requires that applicants for a permit to carry a protective firearm must undergo safety training and must submit to a police background check. Then if the applicant passes the safety class and background check, he or she is to be granted a license to carry. The bureaucratic discretion to deny permits to qualified citizens simply because the bureaucrat does not like guns would be removed.

Progress in the Gunshine State

Carry reform was first enacted in Florida in 1987, amidst vociferous cries from gun-control supporters in the legislature that blood would run in the streets as Floridians shot each other while jostling in line at fast-food restaurants. Florida would become the "Gunshine State," it was warned.

Today, those same critics have admitted that they were wrong, and that they regret the harm done to Florida's reputation by the histrionic campaign against carry reform. Indeed, while the murder rate has risen 14 percent nationally from 1986 to 1991, it has fallen 20 percent in Florida. The state's total murder rate was 36 percent higher than the U.S. murder rate in 1986, and is now 4 percent below the national average. In the same period, robbery rose 9 percent in Florida, and 21 percent nationally.

There has been no research proving that Florida's carry reform was part of the reason for Florida's relative improvement in recent years. But the experience of Florida, and of other carry reform states such as Oregon, Montana, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania, demonstrates that people who are already good citizens and who are willing to pass through a licensing process do not suddenly turn into murderous psychopaths when granted a permit to carry a firearm for protection.

Interrupting a Mass Murder

While tragic mass murders are frequently used by the pro-control lobby to push restrictive laws, evidence suggests that laws prohibiting firearms carrying may be costing innocent lives.

In October 1991 in Killeen, Texas, a psychopath named George Hennard rammed his pickup truck through the plate glass window of a Luby's cafeteria. Using a pair of ordinary pistols, he murdered 23 people in 10 minutes, stopping only when the police arrived.

Dr. Suzanna Gratia, a cafeteria patron, had a gun in her car, but, in conformity to Texas law, she did not carry the gun; Texas, despite its Wild-West image, has the most severe law in the country against carrying firearms. Carry-reform legislation had almost passed the state legislature, but had been stopped in House Rules Committee by the gun-control lobby.

Gratia later testified that if she had been carrying her gun, she could have shot at Hennard: "I know what a lot of people think, they think, 'Oh, my God, then you would have had a gunfight and then more people would have been killed.' Unhuh, no. I was down on the floor; this guy is standing up; everybody else is down on the floor. I had a perfect shot at him. It would have been clear. I had a place to prop my hand. The guy was not even aware of what we were doing. I'm not saying that I could have saved anybody in there, but I would have had a chance." Hennard reloaded five times, and had to throw away one pistol because it jammed, so there was plenty of opportunity for someone to fire at him.

Even if Gratia hadn't killed or wounded Hennard, he would have had to dodge hostile gunfire, and wouldn't have been able methodically to finish off his victims as they lay wounded on the floor. The hypothetical risks of a stray bullet from Gratia would have been rather small compared with the actual risks of Hennard not facing any resistance. But because of the Texas law, Gratia had left her gun in the car and couldn't take a shot at Hennard. Instead, she watched him murder both her parents.

Two months later, a pair of criminals with stolen pistols herded 20 customers and employees into the walk-in refrigerator of a Shoney's restaurant in Anniston, Alabama. Hiding under a table in the restaurant was Thomas Glenn Terry, armed with the .45 semiautomatic pistol he carried legally under Alabama law. One of the robbers discovered Terry, but Terry killed him with five shots in the chest. The second robber, who had been holding the manager hostage, shot at Terry and grazed him. Terry returned fire, and mortally wounded the robber.

Twenty-three people died in Killeen, where carrying a gun for self-defense was illegal. Twenty lives were saved, and only the two criminals died in Anniston, where self-defense permits are legal. Yet while Anniston never made the network news, Killeen did, and is used to this day as supposed proof of the need for severe gun controls. Precisely because lives are saved, instances of citizens using firearms carried on their persons to defend themselves and others rarely make the national news, even though such defensive acts occur with great frequency, as the research of Professors Kleck and Mauser demonstrate.

Emphasis on Gun Safety

Gun control, properly conceived, is not simply a matter of passing laws, or adding to the paperwork involved in retail gun purchases. Gun control needs to involve people control, or more precisely, helping people take control of their own actions. In this regard, the NRA's gun safety programs rank as America's most successful gun-control efforts.

The National Rifle Association was founded in 1871 by Union Army generals dismayed at the poor marksmanship displayed by Union forces during the recent war. The NRA always has placed heavy emphasis on its mission to train American citizens in responsible and effective firearms handling.

Happily, the fatal gun accident rate is now at an all-time low. In 1945, for every million Americans, there were about 350,000 firearms and 18 fatal gun accidents. Today, the per-million rate is 850,000 and 6 accidents. As the gun supply per capita more than doubled, fatal accidents fell by two-thirds.

NRA safety programs implemented by the 32,000 instructors and coaches who have earned NRA Instructor certification have played an important role in the accident drop, and will become even more important in coming years as more and more women choose to own handguns. Since women gun owners are more likely to own for protection, and less likely to have been initiated in sport shooting by an older male relative, safety training for these new gun owners is especially worthwhile, and the NRA has, accordingly, set up a program offering free safety training to women.

The number of fatal firearm accidents for children aged 0-14 has fallen from 550 in 1975 to 250 in 1988. While the NRA always has had junior shooting and hunting programs that emphasize the developments of safe sporting gun use under adult supervision, in 1988 the organization launched a safety campaign aimed at the millions of children who never have any exposure to the shooting sports.

The NRA's Eddie Eagle Elementary Gun Safety Education Program is geared for children in pre-school through sixth grade. Using teacher-tested materials such as an animated video, cartoon workbooks, role-playing, and fun safety activities, Eddie Eagle teaches the simple lesson: "If you see a gun: Stop! Don't Touch. Leave the Area. Tell an Adult."

To date, the Eddie Eagle program has reached almost 4 million children and their parents through schools, law-enforcement programs, and a variety of youth programs. Unfortunately, it has been excluded from some urban schools by administrators who refuse to allow pupils to contact anything related to the NRA, even though the Eddie Eagle curriculum does not discuss political issues.

Controlling Criminals, Not Guns

The NRA's most controversial recent effort is the organization's CrimeStrike program, which takes aim at aspects of the criminal justice system that the NRA considers too lenient. In pushing for laws allowing greater pretrial detention of violent repeat offenders, the NRA adheres to its conservative roots, to the chagrin of some of its libertarian supporters, who are unwilling to protect the Second Amendment by weakening the Eighth Amendment right to bail.

Other aspects of CrimeStrike, such as support for victims' rights laws, cause no dissent within the pro-Second Amendment coalition, and offer an opportunity to improve a criminal justice bureaucracy that sometimes lets the desire to process cases overshadow the necessity to do justice to the criminal *and* the victim.

NRA CrimeStrike strategies, like NRA lobbying, rely heavily on grassroots pressure. In a recent Texas case, Charles Edward Bruton had been sentenced to two 10-year terms for shooting at a woman and for committing a heinous sexual assault against her 11-year old daughter. Having served only three years, Bruton was up for parole last September. After the shooting victim asked CrimeStrike for assistance, NRA members were notified through NRA magazines destined for Texas; the Texas Board of Pardons and Appeals was flooded with calls and letters; the parole was denied.

CrimeStrike will not single-handedly fix the criminal justice system, nor will safety education eliminate all accidents, nor will carry reform wipe out all street crime. But each of these efforts will improve public safety for all citizens, whether they own guns or not. Everyone benefits from a prison system that keeps violent felons off the streets; everyone benefits from reduced risks of gun accidents; and everyone benefits from street criminals facing increased odds of victims resisting successfully.

Today, rather than merely opposing poorly conceived gun-control legislation, right-to-keep-and-bear-arms supporters are working in positive ways. These efforts will enhance not only the rights of the 50 percent of American families who own guns, but also the safety of the 50 percent who do not.